POST-THEORY

Reconstructing Film Studies

Edited by

David Bordwell and Noël Carroll

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Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory

David Bordwell

What we now call "film studies" has existed for barely thirty years. During the mid-1960s film courses proved to be attractive humanities options throughout North American colleges and universities. Young professors of literature or philosophy, themselves often movie buffs, launched courses on Shakespeare and film or on humanistic ideas in Ingmar Bergman, Satyajit Ray, and Akira Kurosawa. American studies began treating films as indices to social currents of a period. A mass art had found a home in mass education.

Since then, in the United States and Canada, then in Great Britain and Scandinavia, most recently in France and Germany, film theory and history came to be part of the academy. More university presses published books on film, while the number of journals expanded. There is now a "field" of film studies, if not a full-fledged academic discipline.

This field has hosted many schools of thought, and a comprehensive survey is out of the question here. Instead, I sketch some leading ideas that have informed the development of film studies in the U.S. academic setting. After reviewing some important pre-1970s developments, I try to delineate two large-scale trends of thought: subject-position theory and culturalism. These, I believe, have exercised the greatest influence over the last twenty-five years. I review their presuppositions and trace some changes and continuities.

Subject-position theory and culturalism are both "Grand Theories" in that their discussions of cinema are framed within schemes which seek to describe or explain very broad features of society, history, language, and psyche. By contrast, there has been a third, more modest trend which tackles more localized film-based problems without making such overarching theoretical commitments. A discussion of this "middle-level" research concludes the essay.

One caveat before I begin. Most accounts of film theory identify more specific schools of thought than the currents I shall trace. A standard account would discuss the 1970s as a period which saw the emergence of film-based semiotics, psychoanalysis, textual analysis, and feminism. The late 1980s would be seen as bringing to the fore Post-Structuralism, postmodernism,

multiculturalism, and "identity politics," such as gay/lesbian/queer studies and subaltern studies. In this essay, these influential movements are situated within the three overarching trends I pick out. For instance, I take academic feminism to be a perspective within which scholars critically examine aspects of women's lives within social orders (notably patriarchal ones). From the standpoint I propose here, we can identify feminist versions of subject-position theory, feminist inflections of culturalism, and feminist projects within the middle-level research tradition. Similarly, questions of postcolonial identity can be studied from any of the three standpoints.

Admittedly, situating these developments within broader intellectual trends risks losing some of their nuance and specificity. The compensating advantage is the possibility of tracing conceptual affinities and historical connections among the various approaches.

Backstory: Authorship

In 1970 academic film studies was a small, disreputable area. A bright undergraduate could read all of the important English-language film books over summer vacation. Film history was treated largely as the development of "film language," as represented by canonized films. Film criticism—never called "textual analysis"—was largely interpretive and judgmental, emphasizing plot, character, and theme. And for English speakers film theory was still largely the province of the "classical" theorists: Arnheim and Eisenstein were still names to conjure with, and Bazin's essays had only recently been translated.

The reigning conceptual framework was auteurism. The young critics of *Cahiers du cinéma* had argued for an aesthetic of personal expression in cinema, and postwar "art cinema" in Europe and the emergence of major Hollywood directors during the 1950s gave impetus to the auteur line. Throughout the world the auteur initiative won the day. Like Soviet montage theory before it, it changed the face of film theory, criticism, and historiography. Henceforth most film journalism and film scholarship would concentrate upon directors and the distinctive world each body of work manifested.[1] In the 1970s, even commercial filmmakers picked up the intertextual referencing and homages that had been common practices amongst the French New Wave directors.[2]

In a wider perspective, however, auteur theory represented an interregnum in some key arguments about cinema that had been conducted for the previous fifty years. Cinema had been discussed along two lines: as a new art, and as a political and cultural force characteristic of modern mass society. Bazin and the critics of *Cahiers du cinéma* can be seen as severing ties both with the medium-specificity arguments of the 1920s aesthetic and with the left-wing political agenda of much film culture since the late 1920s. At the same time,

though, the auteur line intensified one premise that underpinned much of the traditional aesthetic, formulated in 1926 by Iris Barry: "It is obvious that, as regards any one particular film, the director is the man of destiny, the one supremely important person."[3] Andrew Sarris's version of what he called "the auteur theory" set itself against the left-wing orientation of montage theory and much sociological research.

Around 1970, however, with the emergence of academic film studies, the humanistic version of auteurism began to come under attack. There was a new theoretical ambitiousness, largely the creation of French Structuralism. This diffuse intellectual movement was gaining force on the continent and in English-speaking countries during the late 1960s. Claude Lévi-Strauss's was among the first Structuralist work translated, and the Structuralist semiology of Christian Metz became more widely known in Anglo-American film circles at the same period.

Structuralism could also be seen as having a socially critical dimension, particularly when applied to the products of mass culture. The English translation of Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* offered a Structuralism with a human face—disrespectful of bourgeois ideology, bent on showing how the mass media disguise cultural artifice as nature. Ever since, teachers have used advertisements and television programs as primers for teaching students about signifiers and signifieds, codes and connotations.

Structuralist theories offered a way for a new generation—many allied to political movements of the 1960s—to distinguish itself from its auteurist predecessors. In addition, the very idea of Theory attracted young people with a taste for abstract ideas. Students from French, philosophy, and comparative literature discovered that they could study things in film departments that were still controversial elsewhere. And of course, as an intellectual movement, Structuralism's cachet within the university milieu made it appropriate for a discipline still seeking academic credentials.

As would happen again and again, a good deal of the persuasiveness of this theory came not from abstract reasoning and argument—that is, theorizing—but rather from its application to particular bodies of films. Although French critics proposed versions of Structuralist stylistics, the most influential ideas were set to work in the well-established modes of interpretive commentary. A group of critics around London's British Film Institute created an "auteur Structuralism" that revealed binary oppositions in Luchino Visconti, Don Siegel, John Ford, and Howard Hawks.[4] Other British critics produced mildly Structuralist studies of Westerns and gangster films.[5]

Perhaps most lastingly influential was a Structuralist interpretive model which treated film as akin to myth and ritual. According to Lévi-Strauss, myth functions to translate a contradiction in social life, such as that between life and death, into symbolic terms—say, agriculture and warfare. Myth resolves these oppositions by finding a term which mediates between them—in my example, hunting as a middle ground between agriculture and war. The no-

tion that a film offers an imaginary resolution of binary alternatives became a staple of academic criticism. For example, Thomas Schatz argues that like myth, Hollywood genres are social rituals replaying key cultural contradictions. The emphasis which Hollywood filmmakers place upon the resolution of the narrative indicates the importance of key thematic oppositions, such as man/woman, individual/community, work/play, order/anarchy. In order to resolve these contradictions, a mediating figure arises.[6] Arguably, this binary approach to interpreting narrative structure is the most enduring legacy of "cine-structuralism."

Film Studies: 1975–1995

Structuralism in its pure state was to prove a fairly ephemeral phenomenon in the United States. By the mid-1970s, certain streams of thought were merging into an aggregate of doctrines that became self-consciously "contemporary film theory"—often known as film theory *tout court.*[7]

New Left Review, Screen, Camera Obscura, and publications issued by the British Film Institute spread ideas from Althusserian Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Metzian semiotics, and textual analysis among English-speaking film academics. During the early and mid-1970s, French film theorists began teaching in international programs, and their courses turned many U.S. and British students into emissaries of the new ideas. This activity coincided with a broadening of the influence of Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and other *maîtres à pensers* in Anglo-American intellectual life generally. More indigenous currents, most notably feminism, incorporated these ideas, as in Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974). The dissemination of Post-Structuralist ideas was assisted by numerous explications and, crucially, by the 1973 translation of J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis's reference book *The Language of Psychoanalysis.*[8]

As usual, the results of such activities displayed considerable variety. Still, there is a common core. The "New Film Theory" can usefully be understood as asking this question: What are the social and psychic functions of cinema? In order to answer this, film theorists built conceptions of cinema upon some basic assumptions about social organization and psychic activity. These assumptions in turn rested upon conceptions of the "subject" in language and social activity.

According to most such theorizing, the subject is neither the individual person nor an immediate sense of one's identity or self. It is rather a category of knowing defined by its relation to objects and to other subjects. Subjectivity is not the human being's personal identity or personality; it is unavoidably social. It is not a pre-given consciousness; it is acquired. Subjectivity is constructed through representational systems.

In this frame of reference, the biological individual becomes a subject by

virtue of having its inherent needs organized, gratified, and repressed by the processes of representation. The individual's drives are reconfigured as mental representations (wishes or desires) and then either repressed or channeled into socially acceptable patterns. The subject is thus split. Any social action requires a conscious agent who acts and speaks from a coherent position; but according to Lacan this unity is purchased through acquiescence to two psychic registers: the Imaginary, in which the subject finds visual representations of its postulated unity and bodily integrity; and the Symbolic, that register which creates difference and cultural law. Althusser extends the idea of representation to ideology, a process which appeals to the unified subjectivity underpinning conscious agency. Ideology may also appeal to unconscious processes by promising the impossible: gratification of desire in the Symbolic, fulfillment of drives in alienated identity.

At the same time, subjectivity is always in process and fluctuating. To Freud's suggestion that the unconscious emerges in dreams, slips of the tongue, jokes, bungled actions, or neurotic symptoms, Lacan adds that the repression enforced by cultural systems of representation is threatened at every point by eruptions of the unconscious. In every social act the subject's unitary position must be reconstructed moment by moment. Subjects are not merely addressed at a single instant; they are maintained over time.

From something like this set of presuppositions came the new pronouncements about cinema during the 1970s and much of the 1980s. Film was held to be a semiotic system, representing the world in texts by means of conventional codes. As a semiotic system, cinema could be considered to engage the spectator as a split subject, initiating a process in which conscious and unconscious interact.

This interaction was explained in somewhat varying ways. For Stephen Heath, cinema channels desire by offering identifications through sight—the register of the Imaginary—but controlled by the structuring and differentiating operations of the Symbolic. For Christian Metz, cinematic codes direct the scopophilic drive and create an identification with the camera and with the viewer's self as a transcendental, purely perceiving subject. For Laura Mulvey, classical cinema mobilizes scopophilia through voyeurism, fetishism, and narcissism. In another variant, known since as "apparatus theory," the cinema elicits a regression to an infantile sense of wholeness analogous to that yielded by what Lacan called the Mirror Stage. This is that emblematic period in the infant's development when she or he recognizes, or rather misrecognizes, him- or herself in the mirror and thus begins to define the ego narcissistically, as a unified and visible body.[9]

In these various ways, dominant cinema—Hollywood and its counterparts—was seen to gratify desire by offering socially acceptable satisfactions through cinematic codes and enunciative practices. Most theorists believed that the process fulfilled ideological purposes. Through film technology, through narrative structure, through "enunciative" processes, and through

particular sorts of representations (for example, those of women), cinema constructs subject positions as defined by ideology and the social formation. As one theorist puts it: "Ideology is definable as exactly the process whereby human subjectivity takes on the outward appearance of wholeness and unity, and furthermore . . .—in relation specifically to cinema—one of the central ideological operations of dominant cinema is precisely the positioning of the viewing subject as apparently unitary."[10] According to this theory, alternative and oppositional filmmaking tries to block Imaginary identifications, to offer alternative identifications (for example, films of "feminine writing"), and to "deconstruct" the ideological underpinnings of dominant cinema.

Such in rough outline seems to me the "subject-position theory" of the mid-1970s. It did not go unchallenged, but on the whole it was perceived to be the cutting edge of film studies. While its effect on historical research was slight, it had an immediate impact upon practical criticism. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, film academics applied this theoretical framework to films from a wide variety of periods and nations.

Ironically, soon after American academics launched this enterprise, Lacanian film theory fell out of favor in its homeland.[11] (Why? My Parisian informants refuse to say.) In the Anglophone countries, psychoanalytic approaches continue to exercise some influence, particularly in projects with affinities to literary criticism.[12] On the whole, though, most contemporary film scholars act as if the subject-position view collapsed during the 1980s under the onslaught of new trends.

By and large the objections did not seize upon logical flaws. For instance, film theorists could have objected that constituting a subject through recognition required that a prior cognition, and hence a prior state of subjecthood, had already taken place: only if the individual has a conception of itself as subject can it *recognize* that in a representation.[13] Similarly, to accept the Lacanian conception of psychic unity as a valid account of one's own subjectivity must involve the *mis*recognition that, according to Lacan, accompanies all acts of self-awareness. This creates an infinite regress. "The 'I' which analyzes the perfidy of the 'I,'" notes Kate Soper, "must itself be a traitor to the truth."[14]

Film theorists seldom interrogated subject-position theory on this terrain. The objections were far more pragmatic. Feminists and leftists began arguing that this theory provided no satisfactory account of how social actors could criticize and resist ideology. There was, it was often said, no room for "agency" in a framework in which ideological representations so thoroughly determined subjectivity.[15] Postmodernists argued that the unified self purportedly produced by the "apparatus" was a fiction; in the contemporary world, multiple and split subjectivity was everyone's lot.

Subject-position theory also fell victim to the charge of ahistoricality. Before 1970, there were virtually no works of film history in English which could measure up to the standards set by historians in other fields. Slowly, this situ-

ation began to change. Though often attacked as empiricist and positivist, this new historical work could not be ignored. As a result, one of the key polemical thrusts of the 1980s was the effort to "historicize" theory.

The most pervasive result of these criticisms was the culturalist trend. The word "culture" has become to 1990s academe what Toyotas have become for the automobile market, but the term is unavoidable. Theorists began to substitute it for "ideology" and "society." "Culture" came to cover virtually all spheres of social activity, particularly those which orthodox Marxism would have considered part of the "superstructure."

Inquiry into cinema's cultural dimensions was not itself very novel. The interest in the ideological effects of cinema displayed by subject-position theory can itself be seen as a resurgence of pre-1950s controversies around film's socially manipulative uses. And "culture" was very much on the agenda in earlier decades. Not only Kracauer, Benjamin, and Brecht were interested in film's relation to culture; so too were Gilbert Seldes, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Gregory Bateson. In the auteur camp, Sarris and certain members of the *Movie* group broached such issues. Moreover, the French journal *Positif* joined a version of auteur aesthetics to a vigorously Surrealist anarcho-leftism. Although the emergence of film studies as an academic discipline tended to rely upon auteurist principles, it also reinvigorated inquiry into the cultural and political functions of the medium. Henry Nash Smith's influential study of the myth of the American West, *Virgin Land*, furnished a prototype for a cultural approach to the Western, and critics in Britain and the United States explored the mass appeals and social traditions of other genres.[16]

The culturalism of contemporary film studies is, however, more self-consciously theoretical. In contrast to subject-position theory, it holds that pervasive cultural mechanisms govern the social and psychic functions of cinema.

One can roughly distinguish three strands of culturalist theory. There is what we might call Frankfurt School culturalism, which holds that enlightenment thought and industrial society have transformed public and private life over the last two centuries. Writers in this tradition postulate a change in social experience wrought by commodification, market relations, and other processes associated with modernity. This trend takes its cue from Benjamin, Kracauer, Jürgen Habermas, and Oskar Negt.

Postmodernism constitutes a second culturalist strand. Postmodernist thinkers presume that contemporary life is characterized by the dominance of multinational capital and by a corresponding fragmentation—pleasurable or alienated—of experience. In examining film, postmodernists focus upon the capacity of mass media to generate endless diverting spectacle. The postmodernist trend is probably crystallized for humanities scholars in the writings of Fredric Jameson, at once a critic of postmodernism and an influential explicator.

Probably the most influential version of culturalism is that known as Cul-

tural Studies. On this account, culture is a site of struggle and contestation amongst different groups. A culture is conceived as a network of institutions, representations, and practices which produce differences of race, ethnic heritage, class, gender/sexual preference, and the like. These differences are centrally involved in the production of meaning. As one Cultural Studies handbook puts it:

> Culture is seen as the sphere in which class, gender, race, and other inequities are naturalized and represented in forms which sever (as far as possible) the connection between these and economic and political inequalities. Conversely, culture is also the means by and through which various subordinate groups live and resist their subordination.[17]

Cultural Studies, postmodernism, and Frankfurt School culturalism all bid to rival subject-position theory by offering equally foundational accounts of knowing and acting. The culturalist typically treats social agents as participating in many activities; an agent's identity is accordingly constituted in and through the overlap of diverse social practices. Moreover, according to most culturalist views, people are not "duped" by the Symbolic. Their subjectivity is not wholly constituted by representation; they are not always locked into a static subject position; they are much freer agents than subject-position theory allows.

Social practices, culturalists also suggest, are comprehensible only in historical terms. But the versions of history proposed are not the "grand narratives" of most academic tradition. Instead, "microhistories" trace the discourses and practices of agents at certain moments—at the hinge points of modernity, or in the course of our postmodernity, or at moments in which subcultures struggle with dominant culture.

The culturalist trend has sought to distinguish itself from subject-position theory by emphasizing that the object of study is not *texts* (dominant, oppositional, or whatever) but instead the *uses* made of texts. Hence culturalists of all stripes promote reception studies, whereby audiences are often held to appropriate films for their cultural agendas. Indeed, within the Cultural Studies position, notions of subversive films have given way to conceptions of resistant readers. Rather than locating diverse meanings in texts, the culturalist can locate them amongst audiences. Resisting readers can be read. And the reading of such readers can itself be "historicized" through consideration of advertising campaigns, exhibition circumstances, and the multifarious discourses that circulate through a culture.

In the United States, culturalism emerged when subject-position theory fell under attack by the literary "post-structuralism" of Derrida and the late Barthes. Given a strong momentum by feminism, gay/lesbian/bisexual groups, the unorthodox left, postmodernist aesthetics, and multicultural movements, the culturalist trend has become a central force in Anglo-American intellectual circles. Virtually every area of the humanities now nur-

tures its own culturalist wing. Culturalism became a component in what the American press dubbed "political correctness," and neoconservative ideologues have fastened upon it, somewhat desperately, as part of the agenda said to be pushed by "tenured radicals."

What enabled the culturalist trend to be so speedily assimilated? The success of subject-position theory had acclimated film scholars to the need for Grand Theory, and culturalism offered plausible candidates. It too rests its conclusions about media texts and activities upon a broader account of society, thought, and meaning.

At the same time, culturalism probably came as something of a relief. Its theory is generally less intricate and philosophically ambitious than its predecessor. Granted, Adorno and Habermas are not exactly beach reading; but most culturalist theories, particularly those on offer from British thinkers, are far more relaxed and user-friendly than subject-position theory. Given a forced choice, who would not rather peruse Raymond Williams than Lacan, or Baudrillard's *America* instead of Kristeva's *Révolution du langage poétique?* Culturalism's closeness to "cultural commentary" as practiced in journalism and belletristic essays renders it attractive, accessible, and highly teachable.

Both subject-position theory and culturalism put themselves forward as critically engaged doctrines: in demystifying power relations as manifested in popular media, they claim to offer tools for dismantling unjust social systems. Yet advocates at Cultural Studies can lay claim to a more practical politics. Subject-position theorists are vulnerable to accusations of left-wing pessimism. Proponents of 1970s Theory argued that any efforts for social change had to reckon with the ways in which semiotic systems have "always already" created obedient subjects. For example, feminists were urged to understand how, within patriarchy, Imaginary identifications maintain sexual difference. Feminists were encouraged to adopt the sexists Freud and Lacan strategically, as analysts of patriarchy. This theory, articulated in the wake of lost battles of the 1960s, was more diagnostic than prescriptive.[18] It arose at a period when explaining why revolutions fail had a higher priority than showing how successful rebellion might occur.

Cultural Studies is also committed to social change, but it offers a more positive program. The everyday activities of ordinary people are said to be complex negotiations with the forces they confront. And in their strategies of appropriating popular texts, audiences are often said to be reading against the grain in a far more effective way than library-bound academics. Furthermore, subject-position theory carries an ineradicable whiff of elitism, while culturalism is, at least in many variants, proudly populist. To many proponents, political engagement through avant-garde films seems far more implausible than down-to-earth accounts of how "real people" read mass media. Doubtless culturalism instilled in media academics a sense of empowerment. By studying movies and TV shows one could purportedly contribute to political struggles on behalf of the disadvantaged.

Culturalism attracted followers for a simpler reason as well. By the mid-1980s subject-position theory had become sterile through repetition. The theory proposed that certain non-obvious mechanisms—semiotic, ideological, and psychic—produce discriminable effects. And the theory posited a narrow set of causes or functions: this film or that television show always converted the Imaginary into the Symbolic or positioned the individual as a knowing and desiring subject. Everything else was details. Many culturalists object to this "totalizing" explanatory machinery.

The success of culturalism came in part from its swing toward more open, dispersed, and nonlinear accounts than subject-position theorists could countenance. One major culturalist writes that the theory "conceptualizes culture as interwoven with all social practices; and those practices, in turn, as a common form of human activity: sensuous human praxis, the activity through which men and women make history."[19] This breadth not only gives culturalism a large-scale object of study, underwriting its status as Grand Theory; it also gives the critic, theorist, or historian a wide range of materials to search through in producing case studies or microhistories.

For example, another writer has suggested that we think not in terms of this or that film but rather of a "cinematic event"—all institutions, activities, texts, and agents that might pertain to cinema. Both film production and reception open out "onto an infinite cultural space. . . . The cinema event is constituted by a continuing interchange, neither beginning nor ending at any specific point."[20] The idea of "interchange" here seems to include cause, effect, function, and purpose. Now this view can be criticized as simply restating the humanist's uninformative truism that everything is connected to everything else. But it has the institutional advantage of validating a huge variety of research projects.

In practice culturalists limit their projects—notably by using race/class/gender as a heuristic for ranking causal factors, or by tacitly applying intuitive principles of functional explanation. Still, one reason that contemporary film studies seems pluralistic is that culturalism allows people to study virtually any period and find lots of things going on there. And these revelations—funny and bizarre anecdotes; breath-catching remarks made by naïve historical agents; vivid examples of decentered spectacle, antihegemonic resistance, or the shocks of modernity—exude a charm that the more ascetic and text-centered subject-position theory lacked.

Continuities: Doctrinal Premises

There is another reason that versions of culturalism have won so many adherents, and this is worth exploring in more detail. Because of culturalism's explicit disagreements with subject-position theory, it is easily taken as a distinct break. Yet culturalism also attracted followers because in many respects it continues the program of subject-position theory.

Most obviously, many of the scholars practicing culturalist theory and interpretation once subscribed to the subject-position accounts. "I'm moving more into Cultural Studies" has become a cliché of the conference coffeeshop. Accordingly, we ought to expect some continuities between the two perspectives. Scholars who change their opinions do not typically revise their convictions from top to bottom. An intellectual trend that wishes to gain adherents will appeal to common ground—shared presuppositions and habitual practices.

Consider too the overlapping bibliographies. Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, the Barthes of *Mythologies,* and other sources of high-church Structuralism are still required reading for culturalists. Furthermore, some writers acknowledge the links between 1970s theory and the culturalist trend by trying to synthesize them. These efforts usually include reminders of the important gains made by Lacanian psychoanalysis or Metzian semiotics.[21]

Above all, there are deep continuities of doctrine and practice. In this section I will concentrate on four of the former; in the next, four of the latter. Sometimes we will see subject-position claims diluted and relaxed in their culturalist form, but there remain important, if tacit, agreements.

1. Human practices and institutions are in all significant respects socially constructed. The subject-position theorist believes that social structures superimpose historically defined categories upon human beings, thus "constructing" subjects in representation and social practice. Similarly, the culturalist takes social life and the agents who live it as "constructed" in some sense, although the causal networks are complicated: Culture is a social construction by its agents; at the same time, social processes construct culture; and social subjects are themselves constructs of culture.

Constructivism of this stripe, traceable at least as far back as Nietzsche, saturates the humanities. This premise often has a relativistic tinge, since some thinkers hold that, because social life is culturally constructed, all thought and social customs are indefinitely variable and so in some sense arbitrary.

Yet a strong version of cultural constructivism is self-refuting. If all systems of thought are culturally constructed, so is the theory of cultural construction. How, therefore, can it claim that its insights are any more reliable or valid than any other theory's? More pointedly: How can the intellectual argue that the activities of others are culturally constructed while arrogating to him- or herself a position that purportedly escapes this? A parallel argument attaches a relativistic rider. If beliefs are relative to a culture, then belief in relativism must be relative to our culture; but then that doctrine cannot claim true insights into the beliefs, relative or not, of other cultures. As far as I can tell, no film theorists have addressed the self-contradictions haunting the radical constructivist premise.

A radical constructivism is also empirically limiting. Universal or cross-cultural regularities can play important roles in our explanation of human action. It seems likely that scholars simply ignore cross-cultural features of

cinema because they worry that this would necessarily commit them to biological or "essentialist" causes. But this worry is groundless (as I try to show in my essay in this volume). And it is ironic that most film academics, who like most humanists harbor a deep suspicion of the social sciences, actually share with many social scientists the assumption that human behavior is almost completely shaped by its environment. This premise leads to exaggerating the differences among individuals, groups, and cultures and to avoiding inquiry into the areas of convergence.[22]

2. Understanding how viewers interact with films requires a theory of subjectivity. Central to "1975 Film Theory" is the idea that the individual is constructed as a subject, both socially and epistemically. The subject is, most obviously, a role in the social system—worker, owner of property, intellectual—and the subject's "position" may be understood in relation to the class struggle. More radical is the thesis that the subject is also constructed as a knowing entity situated before a putatively objective reality. In this sense, to become a subject is to gain the capacity to undergo experiences and entertain beliefs.

The target here is the so-called Cartesian subject, purportedly conceived as the fully self-aware seat of indubitable knowledge. Lacan claimed that the Cartesian ego was a product of a specific historical moment, and that it was challenged by Freud's discovery of the unconscious. Freud showed that the ego (*moi,* or "I") was achieved only through repression. To secure this point on the philosophical level, Lacan "ontologized" Freud by treating the ego not simply as a *psychic* agency but as a component of the *philosophical* category of the subject.[23] Subjectivity, produced in the relationship between the drives and the Imaginary and Symbolic domains, was a precondition for psychic activity, and a conflicted precondition at that. The ego, as a unified self-conscious agent, was only part of the "split" subject, predicated upon a fundamental lack.

Althusser went on to claim that certain social institutions (Ideological State Apparatuses) create ideologies which construct and maintain a sense of subjective unity and self-consciousness, reaffirming belief in the unity of the self and the possibility of acting voluntarily. Ideology thus manifests itself in representational systems which "position" subjects. Representation creates the very ground of knowledge and experience.

It may seem curious that culturalism would inherit such an esoteric merger of antirationalist philosophy, unorthodox psychoanalysis, and the frequently changing views of an official philosopher of the French Communist Party. Yet the subject of the subject persists. This is, I think, largely because most theorists conflate the category of the *subject* with that of the *individual.* For purist adherents of 1975 theory, the subject is a category that enables knowledge, experience, and identity to occur within signifying practices—even if that knowledge is duplicitous and that experience rests upon repression or regres-

sion. The subject is the ground which renders meaning, difference, and pleasure possible. By contrast, the individual or person is an entity capable of entering the condition of subjecthood.[24]

But this stringent view rarely comes through writings in the vein of 1975 theory. The very term *subject position* encouraged most writers to treat the subject as an agent—you, me, a character, the camera—which can occupy a site. Also, the demands of syntax, which make the epistemic or psychoanalytic subject also the "subject" of a sentence, imply that the subject is an individuated agent. And so throughout the corpus of subject-position theory one can find an equivocation between the subject conceived as the philosophical/psychoanalytic/ideological *ground* of knowledge or experience and the subject conceived as *the one who* knows and experiences—author, character, analyst, theorist, or any other personified agent. Thus after declaring that "the subject is determined by signifiers," Kaja Silverman claims that "the connections which are productive of meaning can only be made in the mind of the subject."[25]

The notion of subject-as-individual has underwritten culturalist writing as well. One critic asserts that *Salaam Bombay!* works to "produce the Indian subject in terms dictated by the representational codes of the West."[26] The ensuing argument considers how characters and their world are represented. Similarly, Thomas Waugh proposes that in gay narrative films one can locate an "invisible subject" behind the camera—the producer and spectator—as well as visible subjects in types representing gay characters (ephebe, queen, artist, etc.).[27] At the theoretical level, culturalists' conception of the subject have proven surprisingly "Cartesian," or even pre-Cartesian.[28]

By treating subjects as conscious individuals who can assume roles, culturalists can reaffirm a key component of their theory: the social agent's freedom. For example, the postmodern theorist Jim Collins proposes that "the activity *of* the subject is as important as activity *on* the subject, whereas previous conceptions of the subject have emphasized only the latter. Due to the bombardment of conflicting messages the individual subject *must* be engaged in processes of selection and arrangement."[29] A subject-position purist, if there are any left, could reply that only if one were already positioned *as* a subject of ideology—that is, already constituted as an instance of self-conscious experience—could one grasp, select, and arrange incoming messages. A critic indifferent to either conception of the subject could simply point out that the notion that the agent exercises choice within constraints is nothing but a truism of social theory.

3. The spectator's response to cinema depends upon identification. For the subject-position theorist, this view entails the belief that all communication, being an interplay of subject and other, requires something like identification to take place. This occurs both in language and in perception. Lacan stresses that identification is the basis of subjectivity, since the "I" is graspable only in

and through the other. The Mirror Stage, in which the infant forms a rough version of the ego through seeing his or her reflection, is the first step toward this other-based identification. Following Lacan, 1975 Film Theory held that socially structured regimes of meaning, known as the Symbolic domain, reinforce and govern Imaginary identification. In the Althusserian doctrine, ideology constructs the subject as a locus of unintelligibility by an Imaginary "interpellation" or hailing ("You there!") and by a concomitant naturalization of what is represented.

According to this view, pictorial systems interpellate subjects by organizing vision so as to elicit a transparent and unproblematic "seeing." This pure perception is the source of the illusion of the all-perceiving subject which structuralists believe that idealist and phenomenological philosophy celebrated. In fact, however, such a subjectivity is purportedly homologous with the Imaginary identification and misrecognition that Lacan identified in the Mirror Stage. It is this Imaginary identification with a point of coherence that guarantees the illusion of reality and of a fully present subject.

Supposedly, then, cinema's "positioning" of a subject is predicated upon a series of identifications—with characters, the camera, a transcendental subject, or a unified subject position itself. At the limit, broached in Metz's conception of filmic "enunciation," there is the claim that in identifying with the filmic *histoire* rather than the enunciatory *discours,* the spectator is under the illusion that she or he is actually creating the film. One psychoanalytic feminist remarks: "It is not so easy for the fiction reader to believe that he/she is creating the text as it is for the cinema spectator to believe that he/she is producing the images on the screen."[30] Throughout subject-position theory, identification is conceived in this extreme, and extremely implausible, way. (If spectators really believed they produced movie images, they would not pay money to enter theaters.)

For the adherent of Cultural Studies, identification has been a more straightforward concept. In grasping features of race, class, gender, or other subcultural attributes, the spectator identifies with the figures on the screen or the cultural allegiances offered by the film. For instance, John Fiske suggests that some women who watch female characters thereby engage in active identification. In this process, the spectator is involved in "completing the meaning of character or incident from his or her knowledge of him- or herself. The viewer is less a subject of the dominant ideology and more in control of the process of identification and thus of his or her own meanings."[31] Once again, the self-misrecognizing subject of 1975 Film Theory has become an active, self-conscious social agent.

Inherited from earlier film criticism (auteur critics pointed out how Hitchcock made us "identify" with characters), the notion of identification remains unclarified in both subject-position and culturalist work. I watch a film. If I sympathize with a character, or empathize with her; if I see things from her optical point of view, or discover the contents of her mind, or share her range

and depth of knowledge, or agree with her attitudes, judgments, and values; if I entertain the thought of what I might do in her situation, or trace the overlap of her and my beliefs, or simply wish her efforts to be successful for reasons of my own—in all these cases, the critic will say that I identify with the character. One could argue, as Noël Carroll and Murray Smith have, that in trying to cover such a variety of cases the concept is simply too vague and equivocal.[32] There is no reason to expect that all these spectatorial activities have similar causes or functions.

More recently, feminist theorists have drawn on the Freudian concept of fantasy to argue that identification needs to be recognized as multiple. On this account, men can identify with female characters, women can identify with males, humans can identify with animals, and so on.[33] This commonsensical conclusion, hardly news to traditional literary theory, does not keep the theoretical bill from falling due. The theorist must still clarify what identification *is* and why we need the concept in order to explain the effects of cinema.

At least one feminist theorist has suggested that the spectator can identify not only with characters but with "the entire scene, or the narrative itself."[34] We must therefore conceive the possibility that a spectator is identifying with "the entire scene" of Monument Valley in a John Ford landscape. But then no response to a film's world would *not* be identificatory. And, as if the concept were not already stretched thin enough, subject-position theorists qualify all these character-targeted processes as "secondary identification" (Metz's recasting of Freud's term), as opposed to a "primary identification" with the agency by which we gain access to the film's world. According to this view, the spectator "identifies" with the representing instance—the camera, the narration, the narrator, even the author. Again, though, exactly why all processes of representation should be lumped under the concept "identification" remains obscure.

4. Verbal language supplies an appropriate and adequate analogue for film. On the subject-positioning view, language is the prime instance of a representational system. As an abstract system of categories and rules (what Saussure calls *langue*), language presents a closed structure, establishing meaning through difference. Thus the individual finds subjecthood within the oppositions set out by a given *langue* (male/female, father/mother). But in its active aspect (*parole*), language also creates and maintains subjectivity. The act of speaking assigns subject positions through certain privileged terms (*I/you, here/there*). Notoriously, Lacan recruited such Structuralist ideas to his version of psychoanalysis. He asserted that the laws of the unconscious are associative principles which are analogous to linguistic processes: condensation is a form of metaphor, displacement is a form of metonymy. "The unconscious is structured like a language."

Language, as the principal means of structuring subjectivity, becomes a

model for all symbolic systems. Subject-position theorists accordingly treated cinema as analogous to language in its structure and effects. Its "codes" vary across the history of the medium. An individual text becomes analogous to an instance of *parole,* and film scholars developed the idea of "enunciation," a process that inscribes into the text subject positions for addresser and addressee.

Most variants of culturalism continue to subscribe to semiotic premises, and Cultural Studies is frequently committed to the radical conventionalist position often ascribed to Saussure. Stuart Hall's essay "Encoding/Decoding," a locus classicus of culturalism, asserts the linguistic analogy: "televisual discourse" is "subject to all the complex formal 'rules' by which language signifies."[35] This claim is sweeping enough (*all* the rules of language? honorifics? subject/verb agreement? the formation of plurals?), but Hall goes still further and asserts that highly habituated decoding has masked those rules from us. We take the sign for the thing: "[Naturalization] leads us to think that the visual sign for 'cow' actually *is* (rather than *represents*) the animal, cow."[36] If this is true, then people react with surprising equanimity when they find tiny cows grazing inside their TV sets.

As Hall's article indicates, what *langue* and *parole* have been for subject-position theory, "discourse" has been for culturalism—the term through which any work in any medium can be understood. A particular film offers a text or discourse; a group of films constitutes one too. The language analogy is attractive because it allows critics to apply protocols of literary interpretation, a central inspiration for both subject-position theory and culturalism. Most film scholars have still not become comfortable with analyzing the visual and aural aspects of films. They prefer instead those aspects which lend themselves to traditional literary commentary—plot, character, and dialogue. Reception studies, which concentrate upon the "discourses" around a film—principally and inevitably, critical reviews—likewise avoid exploring medium-specific factors.

Despite three decades of work in film semiotics, however, those who claim that cinema is an ensemble of "codes" or "discourses" have not yet provided a defense of why we should consider the film medium, let alone perception and thought, as plausibly analogous to language.

Continuities: Reasoning Routines

Not only doctrinal premises bridge the subject-position/culturalist divide. I would argue that at least four protocols of theory-making—not "methods" but habits of mind, routines of reasoning—also run through film studies of the last three decades.

1. Top-down inquiry. Most contemporary film writers appear to believe that theory, criticism, and historical research ought to be doctrine-driven. During

the 1970s, film researchers held that no theory of cinema could be valid unless anchored in a highly explicit theory of society and the subject. The culturalist turn has intensified this demand. Rather than formulating a question, posing a problem, or trying to come to grips with an intriguing film, the writer often takes as the central task the proving of a theoretical position by adducing films as examples. From the theory the writer moves to the particular case. Lévi-Straussian analyses of the Western, feminist conceptions of the body in film, Jamesonian accounts of the postmodernity of *Blade Runner*—again and again research is seen chiefly as "applying" a theory to a particular film or historical period.

The difficulty here is that just as one swallow doesn't make a summer, a lone case cannot establish a theory. When theory projects downward to the datum, the latter becomes an illustrative example. The result may have rhetorical force, as vivid examples often do, but because of the underdetermination of theories by data, a single instance is not particularly strong evidence.

The sources drawn upon by top-down inquiry have remained surprisingly consistent since the late 1960s. The books and journals, seminars and symposia which promulgated semiotics, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Althusserian Marxism were based principally in France, and it was as "ideas from France"[37] that they entered Anglo-American film culture. Comparatively indigenous developments, such as feminism, were strongly influenced by French theory. To this day, contesting orthodoxy often comes down to picking different Parisians to back. A 1993 book that denounces psychoanalytic film theory as "a religious cult" and "utterly bankrupt" goes on to explain: "Rejecting Freud and Lacan, I draw instead upon a variety of theoretical sources: Benjamin, Bataille, Blanchot, Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari."[38] The *maîtres à penser* bump into one another in the pages of film books far more often than on the Boulevard St.-Michel.

Why this reliance on Parisian sources? The 1960s had already created a widespread Francophilia amongst film intellectuals. Auteurism had initiated a tradition of borrowing from the French; Sarris alerted a generation to *Cahiers* and Bazin. And of course from *Hiroshima mon amour* to *Weekend* French directors were seen as perhaps the prime source of politically and aesthetically challenging films. Moreover, departments of comparative literature were important conduits of the new theory into the United States, and cinéphiliac professors, in the course of transmitting current Parisian ideas, promoted French theory as paramount. Finally, in the effort to win academic respectability, film scholars could best show their work to have significance if there were a powerful theory backing it up. Auteurism was a connoisseurship that required a staggering knowledge of particular films. In an academic context, such knowledge could seem mere buffery, so auteur studies could not fully justify studying movies "seriously." An analysis of Hitchcock that purported to demonstrate a theory of signification or the unconscious was more worthy of academic attention than an analysis of recurring authorial motifs.

Culturalism has continued the reliance upon French ideas. The postmod-

ern strain marks its indebtedness to Lyotard, Baudrillard, and the like. Those in debt to the Birmingham Centre also draw heavily upon Foucault and Bourdieu. Even the Frankfurt School wing, in many respects opposed to Francophilia, has been known to integrate aspects of French theory.

Is it necessary to point out that French intellectual life inclines its celebrities to bold, even caricatural positions and quick turnarounds? French humanistic thought is celebrity- and fashion-driven to a degree uncommon in Anglophone countries. With no apparent irony, a middlebrow Parisian weekly can run a special issue, "French Thought Today," adorning its cover with a picture of Rodin's thinker leaning against the Louvre's pyramid and announcing articles on "The Keywords," "The Schools and Circles," "The New Themes," "Who Thinks What?" and "A Who's Who of 45 Leading Men."[39] One sociologist has pointed out that this solemnly self-regarding frivolity is a response to the social conditions of intellectual work in France.[40]

Borrowing so heavily from continental theory also poses the problem of inadvertent narrowness. Since relatively few film scholars expertly read the relevant European languages in which these theorists write, contemporary film studies depends heavily upon translations. But German sociology and psychology of film, East European film theory, and Italian and Scandinavian semiology have gone untranslated, and so contemporary Anglo-American film studies has taken little note of them. Compared to other scholarly disciplines, film studies has been notably provincial.

Even with respect to the most favored nations, peculiar time lags appear. Film studies can't really be called trendy, because by the time film scholars spot a trend, it has passed out of fashion on its home ground. Structuralism, in decline after 1967 in France, captivated American humanists for decades; a noteworthy instance is Jameson's circling of the Greimassian square.[41] Although Barthes' 1950s essays on myth are largely pre-Structuralist, they were not translated into English until 1972; they rapidly became founding texts for both subject-position adherents and culturalists. Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* was introduced to a Parisian public in 1966; his influence in Anglo-American film studies follows from the translations and commentaries generated by Slavists in the 1980s. While Parisian intellectuals were discovering the Gulag Archipelago and disavowing Althusser, Anglo-American intellectuals were reading *Reading Capital.* While Lacan was unraveling Borromean knot theory, Anglophones were burrowing into his writings of the 1950s and early 1960s. Now, when Parisian film academics are working principally on what can only be called traditional film aesthetics, Americans are reading Baudrillard, Irigary, Bourdieu, and other 1970s-era thinkers. If American academics really want to be au courant, they should be embracing liberal humanism, the latest discovery sweeping the City of Light.[42]

Whatever its sources, doctrine-driven thinking discourages a careful analysis of problems and issues. It encourages a more or less contingent search for second-hand ideas. Professors commonly advise confused students: "Why

don't you use so-and-so at this point in your analysis?" Many film scholars find it more congenial to read the latest translation of a French master (or to turn to the latest Routledge précis) than to engage in research or reflect on questions for themselves.

At worst this technology spins out into mere appeal to authority. The pronouncements of Lacan, Althusser, Baudrillard, *et cie* are often simply taken on faith. Walter Benjamin's McLuhanite assumption that the organization of human sense modes "is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well" is offered on the basis of extremely scanty evidence;[43] yet Frankfurt-influenced studies of early cinema routinely presuppose this idea in claiming that modernity altered human perception.

Still, top-down application has succeeded partly because it can be taught. Graduate students are encouraged to go beyond any writer's explicit case to probe what she or he takes for granted. Once the student keeps probing, and particularly if she or he reads associatively and metaphorically, she or he can arrive at very general assumptions—not only about film but about the nature of existence, of social life, of the mind and history. Often these assumptions are remarkably banal ones, or they do not affect the specific arguments of the text; nevertheless, students are encouraged to make them overt. People thereby come to believe that in order to say something about a particular problem one must be perfectly transparent and explicit about all one's most fundamental beliefs; for these are held to determine everything one could say about the issue at hand. Put another way: What could make people think that they *needed* a highly elaborated theory of ideology or culture in order to talk enlighteningly about a particular film or historical process? Partly, I suggest, an institutional routine which posited that every argument rested upon some larger assumptions about just such matters.

2. Argument as Bricolage. The top-down theorizing of 1975 Theory drew from widely diverse intellectual traditions—not only the triumvirate of Marx, Freud, and Saussure, but also Vico, Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl, and a host of others. Far from being a coherent system, this Grand Theory was a patchwork of ideas, any of which might be altered or removed when "recent developments," as they were usually called, threw it into question. The result was what Jonathan Rée has dubbed the *nouveau mélange.*[44]

Although culturalists sometimes attack the particular sources of subject-position theory, culturalism is just as eclectic in its inspiration. Any manual of Cultural Studies provides instances. Graeme Turner, for example, presents a bricolage of Propp, Lévi-Strauss, Todorov, Mulvey, and Will Wright, treating them all as contributing to the Cultural Studies perspective on narrative.[45]

Turner's enterprise is emblematic in another way. In assembling his theory of narrative, he does not mention that Propp and Lévi-Strauss declared their theories incommensurable. Yet such incompatibilities risk making any synthesis incoherent. It is likewise difficult to reconcile Lévi-Strauss's insistence on

innate categories of human thinking with the idea that subjectivity is imposed from without. Lacan's recasting of Jakobson's linguistics is at least as extensive as Althusser's recasting of Lacan. A term drawn from the Russian Formalist tradition can be found alongside an invocation of the Hegelian concept of the Other. The Look passes from Kojève to Sartre to Lacan to film theory, each time rethematized.[46] The risk of selectively borrowing pieces of theories is that the scholar may miss exactly those portions of one source that contradict the assumptions of others.

But this eclecticism has its limits—what might be called, in the spirit of subject-position theory, its repressed. The subject-position framework proved highly selective—indeed, arbitrary—in assembling its theories. Film scholars characteristically cite Althusser for his account of Ideological State Apparatuses, ignoring his urge to demarcate a "science." Theorists highlight Lacan on the Imaginary and the Symbolic, while his discussions of the Real, let alone his baffling excursions into topology and knot theory, are ignored.[47]

Similarly, it is surprising that theorists who assign language a key role in determining subjectivity have almost completely ignored the two most important contemporary developments in linguistic theory: Chomsky's Transformational Generative Grammar and his Principles-and-Parameters theory. The silence is plainly strategic. Chomsky argues that language structure is in major respects biological and that central features of language involve not cultural variations but universal regularities. One could not hold that language imposes a culturally constructed notion of subjectivity upon the biological individual if there were good reason to believe that linguistic structure is part of human biological endowment. Yet no film theorist has mounted an argument for *why* the comparatively informal theories of Saussure, Émile Benveniste, or Bakhtin are superior to the Chomskyan paradigm.[48] For over two decades film theorists have made pronouncements about language without engaging with the major theoretical rival to their position.

3. Associational Reasoning. Psychoanalytic theorist Guy Rosolato is talking with film theorist Raymond Bellour. Rosolato remarks that in order to speak in detail of a film, he would have to analyze it on a stop-motion viewer. Bellour replies: "Do you mean to say that if one cannot re-view a film in this way, it practically does not exist?" Later Bellour comments that some of cinema's formal processes induce affect, and he takes the flashback as an example.

> No matter what the flashback actually recounts, by its very nature it provokes an extremely violent emotional shock through the mere fact that it points to the past. One of my friends had a slightly disturbed relation to his past at one point and flashbacks had an almost automatic effect on him; one could say that it was their form itself that made him cry.[49]

Presumably the interlocutors mean us to take the conversation seriously. (After all, they published it.) Yet the discussion is unintelligible because the

connections among ideas meet no canons of reasonable inference. Rosolato says that a film must be examined closely in order to be discussed with precision; what grounds are there for Bellour's remarkable conclusion that perhaps therefore the film does not exist? Bellour claims to have had a friend who wept during flashbacks; why should Bellour infer that flashbacks necessarily provoke violent emotional upheavals in everyone?[50]

The game of tag played with ideas in this dialogue exemplifies another habit of mind prevalent in film studies. Both subject-position theorists and culturalists tend to shy away from inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning. They rely upon remarkably unconstrained association.

Since analyzing the flow of an argument takes a little time, I summon only one illustrative example. Joan Copjec begins an essay on *Double Indemnity*[51] by asserting that there is "something unsatisfying" (168) about the insurance investigator Keyes's invocation of actuarial statistics in explaining why he doubts that the death of Diedrichson was a suicide. The spectator who does not find Keyes's intuition problematic will block Copjec's argument at the start, but let's assume that others share her unease. She goes on to ask: "How is it that an appeal to statistics can be taken as a devastating argument? . . . What, in the final analysis, do numbers have to do with detection?" (168) These two questions are not the same, since the first bears upon the evidentiary grounds for an argument, while the second poses a much broader range of possible relations between "numbers" (not just statistics) and "detection" (not an argument). Already an association of ideas (statistics → numbers, argument → detection) is ruling the critic's interpretation.

Copjec finds the answer in the origins of detective fiction. (Why the relation of statistics to argument, or numbers to detection, can best be discovered through a search for origins is not explained.) Copjec proposes "linking" detective fiction to "the advent of rationalism" (168). This is a very elastic link, since Copjec identifies rationalism with Descartes, who died in 1650, and most historians date the modern detective story from the 1840s. Moreover, Descartes relies on a purely deductive method, whereas Sherlock Holmes and other sleuths employ induction (not, as Copjec astonishingly asserts, a priori ideas [169]).

Copjec forges another link—that between the emergence of detective fiction and an unprecedented production of statistics, "an avalanche of numbers" (169). But she does not establish any causal connection between the publication of Poe's tales and the rise of statistical methods. Instead, she relies on metaphorical associations. The rise of statistical bureaucracies created "modern nations as large insurance companies"—a mnemonic "linkage" to *Double Indemnity* (170). Statistics made citizens more aware of the incidence of murder (another associative linkage to *Double Indemnity*). And statistics made people believe in the calculability of risk. Copjec concludes that the detective story is a product of statistical calculation. "The nineteenth century's fictional belief in the solvability of crime was specifically a mathematical

expectation. . . . Before statistics this sort of expectation was strictly impossible, and so, I would argue, was detective fiction" (170).

No line of reasoning has even begun to establish this dazzling claim. Even if detective fiction was created out of statistical procedures, that contingent fact does not support the inference that detective fiction was impossible (let alone *strictly* impossible) before that. Moreover, detective fiction virtually never employs statistical reasoning. And in any case there are earlier fictions presupposing that a crime is soluble; The Strange Case of Oedipus Rex comes to mind.[52]

The article goes on assembling concepts in the same associative fashion. The toting up of information in the detective story calls forth Foucauldian concepts of surveillance and disciplinary power, which in turn bring to mind a recent study of the rise of the realist novel. The linkages involve not causality or entailment but connotation and likeness. ("Here we may stop to note a certain similarity between the rationalist project and that of new historicism," 171.) Copjec concludes that detection "constitutes the very people with which [sic] it comes into contact." Detective fiction is "linked" to statistical sorting; and in counting people, statistics "created them. Beneath the categories actual people came into being" (171). If detection and numerical categories can bring actual people into being, the laws of genetics will need drastic revision.

The example illustrates how the associationist reasoning of contemporary film theory can create a bricolage of parallels, interpretive leaps, and nifty but unsupported conclusions. Such associational thinking meshes smoothly with the juggling of terms, names, and references encouraged by the bricolage strategy.

4. The Hermeneutic Impulse. The urge to "apply" theory, as well as the demand that theory be specific and accessible, led Anglo-American writers to interpret films as instantiations of theoretical categories and propositions. Many examples show this process at work. Ever since the 1960s, interpretation has been central to academic film studies, and both theoretical and historical work have been subordinated to it. Now, as in the days of authorship and before, most of film studies consists of critical commentary on individual films.

For subject-position theory, the turn to top-down applications was perhaps inevitable. Expressing a disdain for "empiricism," theorists resisted those skeptics who sought, say, to challenge Lacan's account of subject formation by pointing to evidence from studies in child development. This resistance is partly a consequence of many academic humanists' hostility to and ignorance of scientific research.[53] But the refusal to supply confirmatory evidence is also characteristic of contemporary film theory's wholesale recasting of Freud.

For example, in a recent exposition of subject-position theory, Sandy

Flitterman-Lewis asserts that Freud's metapsychology is a "conceptual model" that "defies empirical verification."[54] Yet Freud writes of his metapsychology:

> It must not be supposed that these very general ideas are presuppositions upon which the work of psychoanalysis depends. On the contrary, they are its latest conclusions and are "open to revision." Psycho-analysis is founded securely upon the observation of the facts of mental life; and for that very reason its theoretical superstructure is still incomplete and subject to constant alteration.[55]

Freud makes his metapsychology speculative, non-foundational, and open to empirical disconfirmation. Flitterman-Lewis turns his speculations into presuppositions for the study of subject-positioning in film and then claims that these foundations are resolutely nonempirical.

She goes still further beyond Freud in declaring: "Once the unconscious and its mechanisms are seen to establish the fundamental discontinuity of psychic life, there can never be absolute certainty about empirical observation" (135). First, note that the reference to "absolute certainty" is a red herring. No serious researcher in any domain claims absolute certainty for observations. (In chapter 2 Noël Carroll provides further discussion.) Second, as Freud's passage indicates, he would certainly not assert that psychoanalysis makes observation uncertain. After all, he thought he was founding a medical science: diagnosing a patient's symptoms and arriving at a cure depend, he says, upon "observation of the facts of mental life."[56]

Film theorists, however, had no patients to worry about, so they could easily declare subject-position theory invulnerable to empirical objection. Theory was henceforth to be written as bricolage of other theories, never breaking out of the charmed circle of associative linkages and recent developments. But what to write? The most common course was simply to compose expositions of subject-position doctrines. The apparently endless résumés of the thoughts of Lacan, Metz, Oudart, Mulvey, and so on attest to the attractiveness of this option. Alternatively, one could logically dissect the theoretical claims of subject-position theory. Since this is a difficult task, we should not be surprised that the amount of "pure theory" written during the 1970s is quite small.

Most film academics pursued a somewhat different option. Subject-position theory generated a huge number of interpretations of individual films. Elsewhere I have suggested that film critics utilized theoretical ideas in ways that conform to the traditions of literary interpretation.[57] Moreover, the idea of using the theory to "read" films has its precedents in the subject-position tradition itself. Freud occasionally applied psychoanalysis to literary texts, and Sartre used literary examples to illuminate his philosophical points. Most tellingly, whereas Freud characteristically based his arguments upon data taken from clinical or personal experience, Lacan frequently illustrated

his doctrines with detailed commentary on literary texts. With such encouragement, it should be no surprise that the bulk of subject-position work has concerned itself with "applying theory" in the act of interpretation.

By this process, subject-position theorists made interpretation a substitute for the empirical dimension they had cast out. For most scholars, a theory gained plausibility when it yielded a fresh reading of a film. Subject-position theory probably could not have won so many adherents if it had not shown that it could be "applied."

The culturalist trend has also been resolutely hermeneutic. Sometimes it is a matter of reading viewers rather than texts, as when Cultural Studies adherents undertake quasi-ethnographic interpretation of audiences. At other moments the culturalist will gather journalistic reviews and interpret them as evidence of "reading formations" or reception processes.[58] And often the culturalist view is no less text-centered than subject-position theory, generating readings that are substantially indistinguishable from the sort of commentary that became commonplace in the 1970s. One essay in Cultural Studies offers a quite traditional symptomatic reading of the gilded woman in *Goldfinger*'s title sequence: "At once sexually alluring and rewarding, as desirable as the gold of the title song, and finally laid on her back, in the ultimate demonstration of Bond's phallic power, she is at the same time deeply troubling and threatening to Bond in containing, within her body, the castrating threat represented by Goldfinger."[59] Similarly, Miriam Hansen's discussion of Griffith's *Intolerance* identifies Cyrus as the phallus, treats Babylon's fall as a "fissure of the ego," and claims that Griffith's editing "turned the father's sword against himself and performed something like a metaphorical self-castration."[60] Once more, culturalism is often closer to subject-position theory than adherents acknowledge.

Must a theory prove its validity through interpretations of particular films? There is no reason to think so, as Carroll argues in the essay which follows. Do the theories yield the interpretations as entailments? I have tried to show elsewhere that when interpreting films, critics follow a set of craft-like reasoning routines which do not depend on any abstract theory.[61] But clearly practitioners believe that by engaging in concrete "readings" they are somehow supporting the theory. (Significantly, no published interpretation has ever *disproven* the candidate theory.) Indeed, interpretations often function as allegories or figurations of the theory from which they issue.

Middle-Level Research

Subject-position theory and culturalism constitute Grand Theories. Each rests upon several substantive premises about the nature of society, history, mind, and meaning. Each of these premises can be traced back to nineteenth-century intellectual traditions.[62] Concrete interpretations of films and filmic

contexts are thought to flow from these Theories, instantiating the processes already provided for in the abstract doctrines.

During the rise of subject-position theory and culturalism, another trend came to the fore. Closer to traditional academic scholarship, this tendency has concentrated on in-depth research. This "middle-level" research asks questions that have both empirical and theoretical import. That is, and contrary to many expositors of Grand Theory, being empirical does not rule out being theoretical.[63]

The most established realms of middle-level research have been empirical studies of filmmakers, genres, and national cinemas. This tradition has been enriched by gay/lesbian, feminist, minority, and postcolonialist perspectives. Researchers have begun to bring to light films, filmmakers, and Third World cinemas long ignored by orthodox film history.[64] A wider corpus of films and new information about particular film cultures have also complicated and nuanced the questions which film theorists ask. For example, the relation between African films and indigenous traditions of oral storytelling is a paradigm case of a researchable middle-level problem.[65]

Other examples belong to the historiographic trends that emerged in the mid-1970s and led to a wave of "revisionist" work in the 1980s. Film history as a scholarly pursuit is of even more recent vintage than film theory and criticism. Although book-length film histories were published from the 1920s onward, most were based on secondary sources and small bodies of films. The most useful histories were written by film aficionados, archivists, and independent scholars.[66] And most volumes of film history were nation-based or worldwide surveys rather than in-depth, monographic works.

The move by film studies into the academy during the late 1960s provided conditions for more systematic scholarly work. Young academics had often had some training in historiographic research, and professional historians became more interested in working in cinema as well. This influx of new researchers came at a time when archivists and librarians (often themselves with some training in history and cinema) began to recognize the value of films and film-related documents. Major sets of papers were microfilmed. Important film collections became more open to researchers. By the 1980s, many archives allowed researchers to view films on editing machines. European archives became more hospitable. Film scholars began to realize the importance of trade journals and newspapers, court cases, and other print materials generated around the film trade. Recall that Georges Sadoul and Jean Mitry wrote their massive histories from personal libraries and clipping files, and you will appreciate the vistas that academic support opened up to the young film historians of the 1970s.

Many sorts of "new film history" emerged at the period. One offered an unprecedentedly well-supported examination of the business aspects of the movie industry. Since most of the primary documents available in collections related to Hollywood cinema, there began to appear systematic studies of the

structure and conduct of motion picture companies. How, these researchers asked, did economic forces and principles of management affect the institutions of film production, distribution, and exhibition? The answers began to show the importance of vertically integrating the companies, owning real estate, assimilating new technologies, dividing labor, and strategizing for a worldwide market.[67] These research programs continue to bear fruit, often by extension to other nations' industries.[68]

Another set of questions involved practices of film exhibition. Historians began to reconstruct what cinema was like in Manhattan or Chicago neighborhoods.[69] Instructors taught historiographic method by assigning students the task of writing histories of local exhibition.[70] Debates arose about the composition of early film audiences and the prevalence of women spectators in sustaining certain genres.

Other researchers renewed interest in the stylistic history of cinema. Since the 1920s, one model of the "evolution of film language" had ruled most discussions. The history of cinema was linked to an unfolding realization of the power of "film syntax," from Méliès, Porter, and Griffith to German Expressionism, the Soviet classics, and the international avant-garde. By developing cutting, close views, optical transformations, and camera movement, silent cinema had supposedly mastered a specifically cinematic storytelling. Bazin and his contemporaries in the *nouvelle critique* had argued against this view, but their advocacy of Jean Renoir, Orson Welles, and the Neorealists served chiefly to widen the canon, not to press historians to rethink the standard story.[71]

During the late 1960s, however, the growing reputation of the contemporary avant-garde suggested that the development toward narrative continuity was only one path cinema might have taken. Warhol made Lumière's static camera more interesting; Ken Jacobs's *Tom, Tom the Piper's Son* (1969), a reworking of an American Mutoscope and Biograph film, revealed the richness of "primitive" scenography. Archives and venturesome film distributors offered a broader corpus of work than ever before. Now Porter looked less innovative; Griffith looked atypical; and the Japanese cinema of the 1930s became of major importance.[72] Since the mid-1970s, historians of style have brought to light more fine-grained and complicated histories of cinematic technique.[73] Research projects on the development of lighting and staging, the emergence of sound film, and wide-screen aesthetics have all been made possible by ingenious exploitation of archival holdings.[74] The study of avant-garde cinema has particularly benefited from critics and historians who have posed researchable questions about film style.[75]

Because all these varieties of middle-level research are problem- rather than doctrine-driven, scholars can combine traditionally distinct spheres of inquiry. Middle-level questions can cut across traditional boundaries among film aesthetics, institutions, and audience response. Lea Jacobs has investigated how

Hollywood's internal censorship mechanisms produced negotiated representations of women at the level of image and narrative.[76] In particular, the massive international inquiry into pre-1920 cinema has generated questions which treat industry, audience, narrative, and style together.

This burst of revisionist film historiography is not the only sign of the emergence of middle-level research. What Noël Carroll calls "piecemeal theory" forms a comparable strategy: building theories not of subjectivity, ideology, or culture in general but rather of particular phenomena. (These, upon inspection, always turn out to be difficult enough to understand.) Thus, for example, several philosophers of art have launched inquiry into horror, suspense, emotional expressivity, genres, and specific questions of feminism.[77] Monographic studies of point of view, genres, and kindred phenomena have already yielded distinct positions and fruitful debates.[78] Film narratology is another thriving middle-level area.[79] Specific hypotheses about spectatorial activity have offered challenges to the terms underpinning both the subject-position model and culturalism.[80]

On all these fronts, the middle-level tradition of scholarship has made significant progress. Perhaps the strongest testimony to the power of these research programs is the extent to which subject-position adherents and culturalists have recruited the findings for their own purposes.[81] The significant issue, however, seems to me whether these established schools of thought can enter the *theoretical* and *methodological* debates broached by revisionist history and piecemeal theorizing.

To get specific: Middle-level research programs have shown that an argument can be at once conceptually powerful and based in evidence without appeal to theoretical bricolage or association of ideas. Moreover, these programs have demonstrated that you can do a lot with films besides interpreting them. In particular, we do not need to understand a film by projecting onto it the semantic fields "privileged" by this or that theory. Most important, the middle-level research programs have shown that *you do not need a Big Theory of Everything to do enlightening work in a field of study.* Contrary to what many believe, a study of United Artists' business practices or the standardization of continuity editing or the activities of women in early film audiences need carry *no* determining philosophical assumptions about subjectivity or culture, *no* univocal metaphysical or epistemological or political presumptions—in short, no commitment to a Grand Theory.

Literary studies, art history, musicology, and many other disciplines within the humanities developed rich research traditions before Grand Theory intervened. Film studies had hardly begun in-depth inquiry when subject-position theorists and culturalists gained supremacy. Had imaginative historians and rigorous theorists not ignored charges of "positivism" and "empiricism," we would not have most of the promising avenues that currently lie open. In the Post-Theory era, sharply focused, in-depth inquiry remains our best bet for

producing the sort of scholarly debate that will advance our knowledge of cinema. Grand Theories will come and go, but research and scholarship will endure.

NOTES

I am grateful to Noël Carroll, Kristin Thompson, and Paisley Livingston for their comments upon drafts of this essay.

1. There were, however, efforts to argue for the screenwriter as auteur. These arguments in the United States replayed debates that had already surfaced in Germany in the 1910s and 1920s and in France during the 1940s.

2. See Noël Carroll, "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond)," *October* 20 (Spring 1982): 51–81.

3. Iris Barry, *Let's Go to the Movies* (New York: Payson and Clarke, 1926), p. 197.

4. See Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Visconti* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968); Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969); Alan Lovell, *Don Siegel: American Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1975).

5. Jim Kitses, *Horizons West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969); Colin McArthur, *Underworld USA* (New York: Viking, 1972).

6. See Schatz, *Hollywood Genres* (New York: Random House, 1981), pp. 30–32.

7. For example, although the title of Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake's *Film Theory: An Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988) promises an introduction to all of film theory, it discusses only subject-position theory.

8. Without Laplanche and Pontalis's compact definitions and citation of relevant passages in Freud and Lacan, humanists would not have been able to absorb psychoanalytic doctrine so quickly. This 1966 book is still taken as an authoritative guide to Lacan's ideas, despite his harsh falling-out with its authors. See Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925–1985,* trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 290, 312–16.

9. See, respectively, Stephen Heath, "Film and System: Terms of Analysis," *Screen* 16, 1 (Spring 1975): 7–77; 16, 2 (Summer 1975): 91–113; Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema,* trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 14–26; and Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology,* ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 286–98.

10. Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1982), p. 47.

11. Strangely, what has persisted within Parisian film theory has been something all but forgotten in Anglo-American circles—1966 semiotics. In 1975 a book called *Cinéma et production de sens* (Roger Odin; Paris: Armand Colin, 1990) would have been deeply psychoanalytic; the nineties version dwells upon Metz's *Grande Syntagmatique.* Metz's last work, *L'Énonciation impersonnel ou le site du film* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1991) likewise ignores psychoanalysis, subject-positioning, apparatus theory, and the like. Other books on film theory, in series published by Nathan and Hachette, produce summaries of semiotic and narratological doctrine for student consumption.

For the rest, most theoretical works produced in France seem to be in that vein of belletristic musing which Barthes popularized.

12. See Joan Copjec, "The Anxiety of the Influencing Machine," *October* 23 (Winter 1982): 43–59; Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock),* ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 1992).

13. This point was made in Paul Hirst, "Althusser and the Theory of Ideology," *Economy and Society* 5, 4 (November 1976): 385–412.

14. Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986), p. 130.

15. This point was broached as a logical, rather than a pragmatic, objection by Noël Carroll in *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 75–78.

16. See John Cawelti, "The Concept of Formula in the Study of Popular Literature," *Journal of Popular Culture* 3, 3 (Winter 1969): 381–90, and *Six-Guns and Society* (Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1971); Lawrence Alloway, "The Iconography of the Movies," *Movie* 7 (February–March 1963): 4–5; Colin McArthur, "Genre and Iconography" (British Film Institute Education Department seminar paper, 27 March 1969).

17. Tim O'Sullivan et al., *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies,* 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 71.

18. See, for example, Keith Reader, *Intellectuals and the Left in France since 1968* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), pp. 39–43; Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 109–117; Tony Judt, *Marxism and the French Left: Studies on Labour and Politics in France, 1830–1981* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 192–196.

19. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," in *Media, Culture, and Society: A Critical Reader* (Richard Collins et al. (London: Sage, 1986), p. 39.

20. Rick Altman, "General Introduction: Cinema as Event," in *Sound Theory Sound Practice,* ed. Rick Altman (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 4.

21. For example, a recurrent theme of Judith Mayne's *Cinema and Spectatorship* (New York: Routledge, 1993) is the demand that any adequate theory of the film spectator take psychoanalysis into account (e.g., pp. 59, 70, 77). Yet Mayne nowhere gives reasons *why* psychoanalysis must be a component in any such theory. She contrasts psychoanalysis with cultural theories and cognitive theories (in the process, misdescribing the latter), but instead of refuting the competing claims by means of psychoanalysis, she simply restates the superiority of psychoanalysis to all rivals. It is odd, then, that Mayne's particular readings of films in chapters 6 and 7 do not rely upon psychoanalytic concepts. Can only those who swear allegiance to psychoanalysis choose to discard it?

22. For a detailed discussion of the social science model of human plasticity, see John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, "The Psychological Foundations of Culture," in *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture,* ed. Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 19–136.

23. "The psychoanalytic experience runs its course entirely on the relationship of subject to subject, signifying in effect that it retains a dimension which is irreducible to any psychology considered as an objectification of certain properties of the individual." Cited in Bice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), p. 101. On Lacan's running together of philo-

sophical and psychological conceptions of the subject, see David Macy's excellent *Lacan in Contexts* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 89–93. Within film studies, Noël Carroll was, I think, the first to argue that Freud's claims about the empirical subject of consciousness do not confute any metaphysical claims about personal unity or identity. See *Mystifying Movies,* pp. 73–83.

24. Stephen Heath argues against the equating of subject and individual in "The Turn of the Subject," *Ciné-Tracts* 2, 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1979): 33–36. Interestingly, he traces the confusion back to Althusser. It might also be seen in Lacan, who exploits an equivocation: the traditional psychoanalytic conception of the subject as the person undergoing treatment, and the philosophical sense of the subject as consciousness or thinking entity.

25. *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford, 1983), p. 19.

26. Poonam Arora, "The Production of Third World Subjects for First World Consumption: *Salaam Bombay* and *Parama,*" in *Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism,* ed. Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar, and Janice R. Welsch (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 294.

27. Thomas Waugh, "The Third Body: Patterns in the Construction of the Subject in Gay Male Narrative Film," in *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video,* ed. Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 141–61.

28. According to a popular handbook of Cultural Studies, the subject is "the thinking subject; the site of consciousness"; consciousness is in turn defined as "awareness of situations, images, sensations, or memories" (Tim O'Sullivan et al., *Key Concepts,* pp. 309, 57). Another British theorist defines cultural studies as being about "the historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity" (Richard Johnson, "The Story So Far: And Further Transformations?" in *Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies,* ed. David Punter [London: Longman, 1986], p. 280).

29. Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 144.

30. E. Ann Kaplan, "Introduction: From Plato's Cave to Freud's Screen," in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 10.

31. John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 171.

32. See Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror; or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 88–96; and Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

33. See Elizabeth Cowie, "Fantasia," *m/f* 9 (1984): 70–71.

34. Constance Penley, "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Popular Culture," in *Cultural Studies,* ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 490.

35. "Encoding/Decoding," in Stuart Hall et al., *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–79* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 129.

36. Ibid., p. 132.

37. I refer to *Ideas from France: The Legacy of French Theory,* ed. Lisa Appignanesi (London: Free Association, 1989).

38. Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. ix.

39. *L'Évenément* no. 201 (8–14 September 1988). Incidentally, the list of forty-five "leading men" (*chefs de file*) includes one woman: Françoise Dolto, noted for her work in child psychoanalysis.

40. See Raymond Boudon, "The Freudian-Marxian-Structuralist (FMS) Move-

ment in France: Variations on a Theme by Sherry Turkle," *The Tocqueville Review* 2, 1 (Winter 1980): 5–23.

41. See, for instance, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 46–48, 121–129, and elsewhere.

42. See the work of Luc Ferry and Alain Renault, particularly *French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay on Antihumanism,* trans. Mary Schnackenberg Cattani (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990).

43. See "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 222. Benjamin cites Riegl and Wickhoff as having "drawn conclusions" about the organization of perception in the fifth century A.D. on the basis of certain art works. This is hardly sufficient to warrant Benjamin's claim that "during long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence" (p. 222).

44. Jonathan Rée, "Marxist Modes," *Radical Philosophy Reader* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 338.

45. Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice,* 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 67–93.

46. For a detailed discussion of how the Look was rethought, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), chapters 5–7. Chapter 8 surveys French film theorists' selective appropriation of Lacan.

47. See my "Historical Poetics of Cinema," in *The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches,* ed. R. Barton Palmer (New York: AMS, 1989), pp. 385–92.

48. One of the few criticisms of subject-position theory on this score was William Cadbury and Leland Poague, *Film Criticism: A Counter Theory* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982).

49. Raymond Bellour and Guy Rosolato, "Dialogue: Remembering (this memory of) a film," in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema,* pp. 199, 212.

50. Perhaps Rosolato mildly rebukes Bellour for this strange leap when he responds: "It can also be pleasant to return to one's past" (ibid.). If Rosolato is right, it would sometimes be pleasant to experience flashbacks—in which case nothing informative has been said by either party.

51. "The Phenomenal Nonphenomenal: Private Space in *Film Noir,*" in *Shades of Noir,* ed. Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 167–97. Citations from the article are henceforth given in parentheses.

52. Although the *modern* detective story is born with Poe, there are several ancient crime/solution puzzles. Apart from *Oedipus,* there are the tales of Bel and of Susanna in the Apocryphal Scriptures. See *The Omnibus of Crime,* ed. Dorothy L. Sayers (Garden City: Garden City Publishing, 1929), pp. 51–55.

53. An excellent criticism of this state of affairs is Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt, *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

54. "Psychoanalysis" in Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 124. Subsequent page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to this article.

Flitterman-Lewis' wording seems derived from Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), but in place of their claim that "Metapsychology constructs an ensemble of conceptual models which are *more or less far-removed from* empirical reality" (p. 249;

italics mine), she asserts that it "*defies* empirical *verification*" (italics mine)—quite a different matter.

55. "Psycho-Analysis," Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. and trans. Ernest Jones, James Strachey, et al. (London: Hogarth, 1953–74) vol. 20, (1925–26), p. 266.

56. Consider his definition: "Psycho-analysis is a medical procedure which aims at the cure of certain forms of nervous disease (the neuroses) by a psychological technique" ("The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest," in *SE* vol. 13 [1913–14], p. 165). For a discussion of the scientific ambitions of Freud's metapsychology, see Patricia Kitcher, *Freud's Dream: A Complete Interdisciplinary Science of Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

57. See *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 97–104.

58. A book-length example is Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

59. Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 153.

60. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 232–233.

61. *Making Meaning,* pp. 29–42, 201–4, 215–23, 252–54.

62. A useful study in this lineage is Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy,* trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). See also Judith P. Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Michael S. Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988).

63. Many adherents of Grand Theory have confused *empirical* inquiry with *empiricist* inquiry. Empiricism names a philosophical tradition that places primary emphasis upon experience in explaining how humans acquire knowledge. Historically, empiricism has often embraced views that the mind is a passive receptacle and that concepts may be reduced to aggregates of sense impressions. No one in film studies espouses an empiricist position.

An *empirical* inquiry is one which seeks answers to its questions from evidence available outside the mind of the inquirer. Film history is empirical in just this way; but so too are all varieties of film criticism, which base their interpretations on evidence intersubjectively available within texts. And most film theory, from Münsterberg to Mitry, has been empirical. Only Grand Theory claims to be nonempirical. (As I've argued earlier in the text, however, its application in interpretation would seem to give it at least some empirical substance.)

Noël Carroll's accompanying essay explores this distinction in detail. Suffice it to say that the middle-level inquiry I am tracing here is at once theoretical and empirical, without being empiricist.

64. Influential examples of gay/lesbian research include Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies,* rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1987) and Richard Dyer, *Now You See It* (New York: Routledge, 1990). On the rediscovery of women filmmakers, see Barbara Koenig Quart, *Women Directors: The Emergence of a New Cinema* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Thérèse Lamartine, *Elles: cinéastes ad lib 1895–1981* (Quebec: Remue-ménage, 1985); and Catherine Portuges, *Screen Memories: The Hungarian Cinema of Márta Mészáros* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). G. William Jones's *Black Cinema Treasures Lost and Found* (Denton: University

of North Texas Press, 1991) signals a new era in archival research into African-American cinema. Of the many instances of postcolonial historical analysis, I mention only Randal Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brazil: Culture and the State* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987); Sumita S. Chakravarty, *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1947–1987* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Lizbeth Malmus and Roy Armes, *Arab and African Filmmaking* (London: Zed, 1991); Keyan Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film* (New York: Smyrna/Lake View, 1988); and Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike, *Black African Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

65. See André Gardies and Pierre Hafner, *Regards sur le cinéma négro-africain* (Brussels: OCIC, 1987); Manthia Diawara, "Oral Literature and African Film: Narratology in *Wend Kuuni*," in *Questions of Third Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1989), ed. Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, pp. 199–212; *Tradition orale et nouveaux médies* (Brussels: OCIC, 1989); and Ukadike, *Black African Cinema*.

66. Examples are the works of Georges Sadoul, Jean Mitry, Lewis Jacobs, and Jay Leyda.

67. See Tino Balio, *United Artists: The Company Built by the Stars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), *United Artists: The Company That Changed the Film Industry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), and the work gathered in his anthology, *The American Film Industry,* 2d ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Douglas Gomery, "The Coming of Sound to the American Cinema: A History of the Transition of an Industry," (University of Wisconsin–Madison, Ph.D. diss, 1975); Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film 1895–1915: A Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); Janet Staiger, "The Hollywood Mode of Production: The Construction of Divided Labor in the Film Industry" (University of Wisconsin–Madison, Ph.D. dissertation, 1981); Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market, 1907–1934* (London: British Film Institute, 1985); David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

68. See, for example, Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), and Colin Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema, 1930–1960* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

69. For a discussion of this tradition and citation of other work, see the chapter by Vance Kepley, Jr., in this volume.

70. Discussion of how this might proceed can be found in Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Knopf, 1985), pp. 193–212.

71. I discuss this process in "The Power of a Research Tradition: Prospects for Progress in the Study of Film Style," *Film History* 6, 1 (Spring 1994): 59–79.

72. Jay Leyda's New York University seminars played a pivotal role in promoting fine-grained study of Griffith and his contemporaries. Noël Burch also pioneered work on early film and Japanese cinema, not only in his books (usually published long after he had written them) but also through his teaching in Paris, London, and New York. See Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) and *Life to Those Shadows,* trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

73. Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (London: Starword, 1983); Joyce E. Jesionowski, *Thinking in Pictures: Dramatic Structure in D. W. Griffith's Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); *Early Cinema:*

Space Frame Narrative, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990); Ben Brewster, "*Traffic in Souls:* An Experiment in Feature-Length Narrative Construction," *Cinema Journal* 31, 1 (Fall 1991): 37–56; and Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *Classical Hollywood Cinema,* pp. 155–308, 341–64.

74. See Lea Jacobs, "Belasco, DeMille, and the Development of Lasky Lighting," *Film History* 5, 4 (1993); John Belton, *Wide-screen Cinema* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

75. See in particular the work done in the New York University Cinema Studies Department during the 1970s. Affiliated with this tendency is P. Adams Sitney's *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–1978* (New York: Praeger, 1974).

76. *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

77. See the special issues of *Millennium Film Journal* nos. 14/14 (Fall/Winter 1984–85) and of *Persistence of Vision* 5 (Spring 1987). See also Ian Jarvie, *Philosophy of Film: Epistemology, Ontology, Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), and *Philosophy and Film,* ed. Cynthia Freeland and Thomas Wartenberg (New York: Routledge, 1995).

78. See, for example, Edward Branigan, *Point of View in Cinema* (New York: Mouton, 1984); Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

79. See Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978) and *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); George M. Wilson, *Narration in Light: Studies in Cinematic Point of View* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-Over Narration in American Fiction Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (London: Routledge, 1992).

80. See, for example, Stephen Prince and Wayne Hensley, "The Kuleshov Effect: Recreating the Classic Experiment," *Cinema Journal* 31, 2 (Winter 1992): 59–75. I propose another way to think about spectatorship in "A Case for Cognitivism," *Iris* 9 (Spring 1989): 11–40 and "A Case for Cognitivism: Further Reflections," *Iris* 11 (Summer 1990): 107–12.

81. For instance, Mike Cormack's *Ideology and Cinematography in Hollywood, 1930–39* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) utilizes no primary documentation for its historical claims and simply absorbs the research of Balio, Bordwell, Burch, Gomery, Maltby, Roddick, Salt, Thompson, et al. as a basis for subject-positioning readings of some well-known 1930s films.

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David Bordwell is the Jacques Ledoux Professor of Film Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. His books include *Narration in the Fiction Film*, also published by the University of Wisconsin Press, *Making Meaning*, *The Cinema of Eisenstein*, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, and many others.

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